

The Ballarat Naturalist

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May Excursion to Ross Creek and Napoleons

report by Elspeth Swan

Our May excursion began at Bodens Water Race No 2 at the junction of Wades Road and Doctors Road, Ross Creek, where there is a small carpark and a sign board indicating the beginning of the walk. It is always a consideration on how far to walk on excursions so we decided as we had 2 other sites to visit, to do a slightly shorter version of this 5 km walk.

This grade 2 walk is mostly beside a water race engineered by Thomas Boden in 1870. Races were hand dug after being surveyed by the government surveyor, and would have been constructed over several years. Water races transported water from various dams to support gold sluicing operations during the gold rush and are now an important link to the history of an area.

Seventeen members joined the walk that winds through Heathy Dry Forest, some of which had been burnt in recent years with burnt bark as evidence. Due to the dry conditions, it was difficult to find insects and flowers to photograph for iNaturalist records, but this site was chosen as there were plenty of interesting mosses and lichens on offer and it is an area many members hadn't visited before.

Some items of interest were several patches of Enfield Grevillea *Grevillea bedgoodiana*, and flowers on Cranberry Heath *Styphelia humifusa* (was *Astroloma humifusum*), Milky Beauty-heads *Calocephalus lacteus*, and Common Heath *Epacris impressa*. Fuzzy Reindeer Lichen *Cladonia confusa* was fascinating as was *Fistulina spiculifera* a fungus hidden in a ground-level tree hollow. Early



leaves of Scented Sundew *Drosera aberrans* were emerging, as were some yet to be identified orchid leaves. The only butterfly observed was a female Common Brown *Heteronympha merope* and there was an interesting Dotted Paropsine Beetle *Paropsis atomaria* noted on some eucalypt leaves.

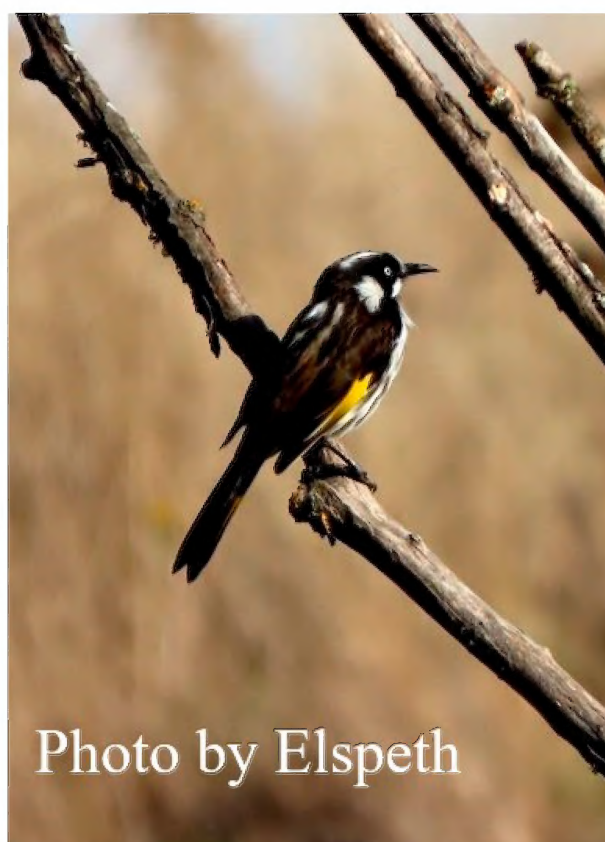


Our lunch spot was beside the oval at the Ross Creek Recreation Reserve where afterwards we strolled around the nearby nature walk. Southern Cinnabar Polypore *Trametes coccinea* was hard to miss as a bright orange fungus on a piece of wood beside

the path. The loop walk has a boardwalk, restored wetland and areas that have been revegetated by the Ross Creek Landcare Group and local community, then enhanced with interpretive signage and nest boxes. This is a place to revisit when the creek is flowing and there is water in the wetland and dam.

The final stop was at Franklin Bridge, Scotchman's Lead where the industrious Napoleons/Enfield Landcare Group has been working away for 10 years to revegetate an area beside the Yarrowee River. They are also waiting to become the official committee of management for the Crown land site.

While some of our members have visited this site before they had not been to the newly extended area where the landcare group is undertaking a massive planting project. Thanks to Jenny Ryle who made time after a busy working bee to come and talk with us at the foot bridge over the Union Jack Creek near the confluence with the Yarrowee. There is a lot of birdlife along the river and evidence of marsupial visitors. A flock of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos flew overhead and New Holland Honeyeaters, Superb Fairywrens and Red-browed Finches were seen on our way back to our vehicles.



Further details of what was observed may be found on our [iNaturalist page](#) and more photos on [our blog](#)

Tarra Bulga Fungi Foray

Report by Les Hanrahan

On 25th to 27th of April, Fran and I travelled to Gippsland to attend the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria's fungi group event at the Tarra Bulga National Park. Tarra Bulga NP at about 600 metres above sea level, is in the highest part of the Strzelecki ranges and between Traralgon and Yarram. The area around the Tarra Bulga visitor centre is classified as Wet Sclerophyll forest. The main eucalypt is tall Mountain Ash *Eucalyptus regnans* with an understorey of Blackwoods, Daisy Bushes and other broad-leafed shrubs. In the valleys, the Rainforest vegetation includes Myrtle Beech *Nothofagus cunninghamii* and Sassafras trees with lots of ferns, including the Hard, Slender and Soft Tree Ferns. The Park had received some rain recently and it was damp underfoot. This was welcome, because the dry conditions back home have meant very low numbers of fungi species seen so far this year.

On the way to Tarra Bulga from our cabin in Yarram we were delighted to see a male Superb Lyrebird crossing the road. Farther along we saw three more lyrebirds and later that day and the next we had about eight sightings of lyrebirds. Fran saw one scratching litter.

I was pleased when I heard the senior mycologist Dr Tom May was attending the foray. I first met Tom when he showed a group around the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne. I remember that he showed us the Seastar Stinkhorn *Anthurus archeri* on woodchips in the Childrens' Garden, and then the Death Cap Mushroom *Amanita phalloides* under a giant oak tree at the rear of the Herbarium. Before we started our foray along the Lyrebird Track Tom told us what was required if one wanted to forward a dried fungi specimen to the herbarium. Tom collected some specimens for the herbarium that day. Tom uses a dehydrator he bought from Aldi. The temperature needs to be set below 40C. Permits are needed if one wants to collect on public land. It is desirable to collect specimens of a species at various stages of growth supported by photos of the fungus from

various angles and the fungi substrate and habitat. Tom told us that he can take half an hour to describe the features of a species.

The most common fungus seen was *Armillaria novae-zelandiae* which appears early in the season in wet forests. It is a parasite but only seems to be on some trees, mostly the less healthy ones. As well as the puffball *Lycoperdon perlatum* we saw the stalked puffball Pretty Mouth *Calostoma fuscum* which has an orange-mouthed opening at the top of the sac that contains the spores. Among the *Mycena* species seen were the blue Pixies Parasol *Mycena interrupta*, the Bleeding *Mycena M. kuurkacea*, the Tall *Mycena M. cystidiosa*, and the shiny bright red *Mycena toyericola*. On a mossy log, somebody noticed a fungus known as Dead Man's Fingers *Xylaria castorea*. This fungus is a clump of grey immature spikes that turn black when mature. Somebody with keen eyesight noticed the sporangia of a slime mould *Craterium minutum*. There were about fifty tiny yellow club-shaped sporangia each about 1.5mm tall on a dead daisy bush leaf on the ground.

Various coral fungi were seen including the whitish-fawn *Artomyces piperata* on wood and the greyish *Clavulina vinaceocervina*. Club fungi seen included the red *Clavulinopsis sulcata* and the yellow *C amoena*. We saw two Australian Burrowing Crayfish *Engaeus affinis*. One had lost a claw. The rear part of this yabby-like crustacean was slightly translucent fawn colour and the front part and claws were orange. It is interesting that the exoskeleton of insects and crustaceans contain the polysaccharide chitin that is also found in the cell walls of fungi.

On Sunday we met at Tarra Valley visitors centre near the Tarra River. Tree ferns were abundant here as well as Myrtle Beech and Sassafras trees. One of our group had seen a platypus in the river the previous week. Fungi seen near here included *Grifola colensoi* in a hole at the base of the tree, and clumps of the brown *Hypholoma brunneum* and *H. australianum* on wood. A shiny dark grey *Entoloma* species had an umbonate cap about 25mm wide on a black

stem, with white at the base. Boletes were scarce, but one *Strobilomyces* species was seen.

An unusual sight was a clump of six greyish-white 50mm tall 'toadstools' on the dead cap of another mushroom, possibly *Austropaxillus infundiliformis*. These have been identified as the endangered species Grey Jockey *Asterophora mirabilis*.



The only flower noticed was the epiphyte *Fieldia australis* which had a white tubular corolla about 50mm long. At the SEANA Spring Camp of 2023 I saw clusters here of the Beech Orange *Cyttaria gunnii* which is a parasite of myrtle beech trees.



In winter 2024, Dr Tom May visited Slaters Road, Mollonghip in the Wombat Forest where in June 2023 Vireya found one specimen of a rare Sarcodon fungus. The chestnut brown cap on this fungus has spines underneath. I alerted John Walter who sent the specimen to the Herbarium. Tom said that the Sarcodon species found at Mollonghip was a different species to the Sarcodon species found in 2022 by Gayle Osborne at Lyonville about 25km away. A few Ballarat Field Naturalists took the opportunity to meet Tom who was able to identify some other species including a large *Grifola colensoi* fungus that Elspeth had found.

Editor's Note: All iNaturalist observations made during the Fungi Foray can be seen in this project:
<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/fncv-2025-tarra-bulga-national-park-fungi-foray>

Dark Sky at Woowookarung

Report by Judith Bailey

On the evening of 22nd April, a combined nocturnal insect and sky viewing night was held in Woowookarung.

The initiative to hold the night came from Peta Glenn of Parks Victoria. Peta, along with Ayesha Burdett of the Nature Glenelg Trust, has developed a range of proposed monitoring activities in Woowookarung, including surveys of birds, butterflies, rare plants, fungi and others.

This was the first nocturnal insect survey, and because it coincided with International Dark Sky Week a couple of telescopes were brought along, as well as UV lights to attract insects, and an insect trap which was left overnight. Thanks to Kathy Elder for the use of Bill's UV lamp.

Dr Ayesha Burdett, Senior Wetland Restoration Ecologist with the Nature Glenelg Trust, and Brian from the *Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA)* provided an

introduction for participants regarding the insect gathering activities. Bianca Fammartino from Leigh Catchment Group also attended.



There was an attendance of 32 and it was good to have several members of younger generations present. Four attendees uploaded a total of 58 observations of 33 species to iNaturalist. All these records can be seen in the Woowookarung Project.

<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/fncb-woowookarung-regional-park>

Thanks to Jenny West for her permission to use her photos of these insects seen on the night:



Short-tailed Ichneumonid Wasp species



Plantain Moth - *Scopula rubraria*

Les Hanrahan has agreed to lead a future fungi search in Woowookarung Regional Park. John Petheram has provided to Peta the earlier survey work conducted by him and other FNCB members in the Park area, begun before Woowookarung became a Regional Park. It would be good to revisit the earlier quadrats to see what changes have occurred.

Excerpts from Club Meeting Minutes 2nd May, 2025

Opening and Apologies

Attendance: President Neville Oddie welcomed 16 members in person and 6 via Zoom. He commented on the bad press recently in relation to “Welcome to Country”. He stated that in his opinion we should continue with an Acknowledgement of Country at our meetings unless anyone had a strong objection. A spontaneous round of applause endorsed his decision to continue with an Acknowledgement of Country at all FNCB Club meetings.

Apologies: Carol Hall, Peter & Claire Dalman, Sheree Cartledge, Mark Moravec, Fran Hanrahan and Emily Noble.

Guest Speaker: Sadly, both guest speakers we had lined-up for the meeting had fallen ill, so there was no guest speaker.

Business Arising from Previous Club Meeting:

1. Neville Oddie has agreed to represent the FNCB on the SEANA (South East Australian Naturalists' Association) Management Committee.
2. The Club's submission opposing Victoria's duck-shooting season was sent to the State Premier, Hon. Jacinta Allan MP, the State Minister for Environment, Hon. Steve Dimopoulos MP, and the Federal Minister for Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water, Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP. So far, only automatic replies acknowledging receipt have been received in response.

Business Arising from Correspondence:

1. The Committee voted to order 20 copies of the Entomological Society of Victoria's new publication “100 Common Moths and Butterflies of Victoria” after a strong response was received from members when expressions of interest were requested. 16 of the 20 copies are already spoken-for. Members present who ordered a copy paid treasurer, Kathy Elder and collected their copy. Kathy will take copies to the field trip on Sunday. The final cost is \$6.40/ ea.

2. Nominations are now open for the Australian Natural History Medallion. A nomination for FNCRB Life Member Roger Thomas is being prepared. Please contact Emily if you have any information about Roger's contributions to natural history over the last 10 years or would like to be involved in gathering supporting information and writing it up. This includes the City of Ballarat Community Nursery, Ballarat Environment Network, BirdLife Ballarat, FNCRB, The Courier's Nature Notes, Clarksdale Bird Sanctuary and any other groups Roger may have spoken to or led field trips for.

3. Discussion was held on the information/photos to be uploaded to the Victorian Environment Friends Network website promoting our Club. All were appreciative of the efforts of Sheree in putting our information together. John P has sent an email with some additional information which may be included. He feels it is important to cover some of the long and distinguished history of the Club in its earlier iterations (pre 1952), particularly the involvement of prominent scientists, explorers and naturalists, in addition to current activities and interests, to build the status of our Club. Kathy commented that photos need to consider privacy and if people are in them, they should not be able to be identified. The committee will progress this further.

4. Discussion was held re the request from Ben Gill, VNPA: VNPA are asking local groups to put together 90 second recordings of "Community Nature Stories" to be used in ongoing advocacy to see the conservation protections of Central West parks improved as per VEAC's recommendations. The videos could cover what a particular area (i.e. Mt Cole, Wombat Forest) means to us, our favourite activity or memory there, and why it matters for us, wildlife, environmental health and future generations. Members were invited to make their own response/video on a personal level.

5. Discussion was held re the request from City of Ballarat's Biodiversity Programs Officer, Tim Read, re threatened species/ community records for Ballarat. Direct Tim to records on iNaturalist

in the first instance. Some members may have their own lists and may be happy to share them with Tim.

Reports:

Treasurer's Report: There are only about 10 membership payments still outstanding. Please let Kathy know if you are not interested in continuing your membership, or pay the fee ASAP to confirm your membership.

Opening bal. as at Apr. 4, 2025:	\$11,998.88
Income	\$569.90
Expenses:	\$1,753.10
Closing bal.:	\$10,815.68

Report on Nocturnal Insects and Dark Sky Event at

Woowookarung: Judith Bailey gave a report on this successful event [see her written report earlier in this newsletter]. Future events will be held to monitor how insect populations change over time in the Park. Citizen Science projects are planned. Judith brought along some draft documents for members present to look at regarding grass-tree monitoring and butterfly surveys. Plans to fence off areas in the future to be a “control” area free from kangaroos.

SEANA Spring Camp 2025 Update: Kathy Elder reported that the first circular is almost ready to be sent out. Working on excursion planning. (See General Business for more info.).

FNCV Fungi Group excursion to Tarra Bulga: Les Hanrahan presented a report on his weekend excursion with the FNCV Fungi Group. [see his written report earlier in this newsletter].

General Business:

1. Planning for this year’s Calendar of Activities is almost complete. Please let a Committee member know if you have a suggestion for field trip destinations and/or leaders for July or August. Mistletoe was a suggestion for a topic for a future guest speaker.

2. SEANA Spring Camp Outings Planning Session. Kathy shared a document on the screen with details of the excursions as proposed by the sub-committee. Most are from our last planned SEANA Camp which did not go ahead due to Covid. These were all full-day excursions, so some have now been split into 2 x half-day excursions. Some more details were confirmed and entered into the document re leaders and facilitators. Neville reminded everyone that hosting SEANA will need all members to do what they can. Please consider volunteering in some capacity.

3. Neville has received a request from the management committee of Mt. Elephant Community Management Inc. for a letter of support for their application for a FRRR grant. They are wanting to obtain funds to replace their signage. They have obtained a quote that it will cost in the vicinity of \$28,000. By general agreement of those present we will provide a letter of support for their application to FRRR for funding assistance.

Field Reports:

- Roger Thomas reported that the flying foxes are back at the Ballarat Botanical Gardens. About 200 a month ago scattered over five or six trees. Today approx. 200 in one tree! Report of some in a flowering eucalypt in Learmonth and travelling from the Gardens at night to feed.

- Wendy reported she saw a fox at 8am in her backyard. Another visitor in her backyard was a Spotted Jezebel butterfly. She shared a slide of the butterfly and also a slide showing her own drawing of it.

- Neville and Kate have been contacted by Zoos Victoria who want to install microphones on their property to locate Plains Wanderers. Zoos Vic has a breeding program for them. Neville and Kate are happy to volunteer their property if there is a need for new places in the future.

- Andy reported he has Woolly Aphids on his apple tree this year. He is hoping for predatory wasps to control them.

- John P. and Angela have both recently seen large stick insects at their homes.

FNCB Membership for 2025 is now due:

Ordinary Member (Adult) \$35

Family \$55

Distant Member \$20

Student Member \$15

Newsletter Postage \$16.50

Please pay as soon as possible. Direct Deposit into FNCB's bank account (details below) is the preferred payment method. You are also welcome to pay with cash or cheque at a Club meeting if you prefer. Or pay via cash or cheque at any branch of the Bendigo Bank, using the details below and ask them to include your surname as the reference.

Thank you to those members who have already paid their membership renewal for 2025.

Bank Account Details:

Account Name: Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat Inc.

BSB: 633 000

Account Number: 119 112 290

Reference: Your Name

Discovering Ballarat's Bushland book sales

Books can be purchased from our Treasurer Kathy

We have also secured the help of some local outlets to sell the book. They include:- Collins Books, Lydiard St & Bridge Mall, Tourist Info Centre Sturt Street, Eureka Centre Gift Shop, Buninyong Tourist Info centre

FNCB members \$10

Other FNC Members \$12

Retail \$15

Ballarat SEANA Spring Camp 17-19th Oct 2025 We are currently recruiting leaders for our excursions. The first circular and registration forms were sent out in May.

Our next club meeting is June 6th at 7.30 pm in person and via zoom.

Our guest speakers will be Jenny & Peter Sedgwick, telling tales and showing their wonderful photography in *From the Shallows to the Deep End: Marine Encounters at Lady Elliot Island*.

Sunday 8th June Fungi Foray led by Les Hanrahan

Sunday 8th June field trip- 9.30am – 4pm: “Fungi Foray at a location T.B.A.” led by Les Hanrahan. Meet at the Federation University carpark on the corner of Gillies St and Gregory St, Wendouree for carpooling (where possible) or convoy and departure at 9.30am sharp.

Destination will be advised in the agenda for our June meeting.

Wear weather-appropriate clothes and clean, sturdy shoes. Bring water, camera, small mirror, field guides, morning tea, lunch, thermos and camp chair. N.B.: Please bring a cash contribution for your driver if you intend to carpool.

A volunteer is still needed to write up this field trip.

Meetings and Excursions

Fri June 6th Jenny & Peter Sedgwick *From the Shallows to the Deep End: Marine Encounters at Lady Elliot Island*

Sun June 8th Les Hanrahan - Fungi foray, location to be advised

Future events

Fri July 4th Angela Aldred *Wildlife and landscapes of Canada*

Sun July 6th TBC

Volunteers are needed to write up these events for our newsletter please.

Next Committee meeting Tues June 24th at 7.30 pm on zoom

Club meetings are normally held on 1st Friday of the month at 7.30 pm at the Federation Uni Gillies St Campus (corner of Gillies and Gregory Sts, Lake Wendouree).

Committee

President	Neville Oddie
Secretary	Emily Noble
Treasurer	Kathy Elder
Committee	Andy Arnold Val Hocking Sheree Cartledge Max Thompson Alasdair Wardle Sue Grey-Smith

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Meetings - in person and may continue to be held via Zoom.
Members will be kept informed of arrangements each month.

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